

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) A method of increasing sensitivity of stem cells to a chemoattractant, the method comprising exposing the stem cells to a matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof, which is capable of increasing a level of at least one chemoattractant receptor of the stem cells to thereby increase the sensitivity of the stem cells to the chemoattractant.
2. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one chemoattractant receptor is CXCR4.
3. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.
4. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2 and MMP-9.
5. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the stem cells are hematopoietic stem cells.
6. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 5, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+ hematopoietic stem cells.
7. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 6, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+/CD38-/low hematopoietic stem cells.
8. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein the stem cells are mesenchymal stem cells.
9. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 1, wherein said exposing the stem cells to said matrix metalloprotease or said active portion thereof, is effected by:

- (i) expressing a polynucleotide encoding said matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof in the stem cells; and/or
- (ii) contacting the stem cells with said matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof.

10. (Withdrawn) A method of treating a disorder requiring cell or tissue replacement, the method comprising providing to a subject in need thereof a therapeutically effective amount of stem cells treated with a matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof, which is capable of increasing a level of at least one chemoattractant receptor of the stem cells, thereby treating the disorder requiring cell or tissue replacement in the subject.

11. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein said at least one chemoattractant receptor is CXCR4.

12. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2 and MMP-9.

14. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein the stem cells are hematopoietic stem cells.

15. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 14, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+ hematopoietic stem cells.

16. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 15, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+/CD38-/low hematopoietic stem cells.

17. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 10, wherein said stem cells are mesenchymal stem cells.

18. (Withdrawn) A culture medium suitable for increasing the sensitivity of stem cells to a chemoattractant, the culture medium comprising a matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof which is capable of increasing a level of at least one chemoattractant receptor of the stem cells and a buffer solution suitable for stem cell culturing.
19. (Withdrawn) The culture medium of claim 18, further comprising a differentiation inhibiting factor.
20. (Withdrawn) The culture medium of claim 18, further comprising serum or serum replacement.
21. (Withdrawn) The culture medium of claim 18, further comprising an agent selected from the group consisting of SCF, HGF and IL-6.
22. (Withdrawn) Use of a matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof for the manufacture of a medicament for increasing homing of stem cells to a target tissue.
23. (Withdrawn) The use of claim 22, wherein said stem cells are hematopoietic stem cells.
24. (Withdrawn) The use of claim 23, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+ hematopoietic stem cells.
25. (Withdrawn) The use of claim 24, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+/CD38-/low hematopoietic stem cells.
26. (Withdrawn) The use of claim 22, wherein said stem cells are mesenchymal stem cells.

27. (Withdrawn) The use of claim 22, wherein said target tissue is selected from the group consisting of bone marrow, blood vessel, heart, lung, liver, pancreas, kidney, nervous system, skin, bone and skeletal muscle.

28. (Withdrawn) The use of claim 22, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.

29. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 22, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2 and MMP-9.

30. (Currently amended) A method of generating stem cells suitable for transplantation, the method comprising:

- (a) collecting stem cells;
- (b) exposing said stem cells to ~~a~~an exogenous matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof; and
- (c) isolating stem cells having increased CXCR4 levels compared to stem cells not exposed to the matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof~~above a predetermined threshold~~, to thereby generate stem cells suitable for transplantation.

31. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein collecting said stem cells is effected by:

- (i) a stem cell mobilization procedure; and/or
- (ii) a surgical procedure.

32. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.

33. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2 and MMP-9.

34. (Original) The method of claim 30, wherein said stem cells are hematopoietic stem cells.
35. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+ hematopoietic stem cells.
36. (Original) The method of claim 34, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+/CD38-/low hematopoietic stem cells.
37. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 30, wherein said stem cells are mesenchymal stem cells.
38. (Currently amended) The method of claim 30, wherein said exposing said stem cells to said exogenous matrix metalloprotease or said active portion thereof, is effected by:
- (i) expressing a polynucleotide encoding said matrix metalloprotease or said active portion thereof in said stem cells; and/or
 - (ii) contacting said stem cells with said matrix metalloprotease or said active portion thereof.
39. (Currently amended) The method of claim 30, wherein said isolating stem cells having increased CXCR4 levels compared to stem cells not exposed to the matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof~~above said predetermined threshold~~ is effected by FACS.
40. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 31, further comprising determining homing capabilities of said stem cells having CXCR4 levels above said predetermined threshold following step (c).
41. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) A nucleic acid construct comprising a first polynucleotide sequence encoding a matrix ~~metalloprotease~~metalloprotease or an active

portion thereof and an inducible cis-acting regulatory element for directing expression of said polynucleotide in cells.

42. (Withdrawn) The nucleic acid construct of claim 41, wherein said inducible cis-acting regulatory element is a shear stress activation element.

43. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) The nucleic acid construct of claim 41, further comprising a second polynucleotide sequence being translationally fused to said first polynucleotide sequence, said second polynucleotide sequence encoding a signal peptide capable of directing secretion of said matrix ~~metalloprotease~~metalloprotease or said active portion thereof out of said cells.

44. (Withdrawn) The nucleic acid construct of claim 41, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.

45. (Withdrawn) The nucleic acid construct of claim 41, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2 and MMP-9.

46. (Withdrawn) A eukaryotic cell comprising the nucleic acid construct of claim 41.

47. (Withdrawn) A cell-line comprising stem cells transformed to express an exogenous polynucleotide encoding a matrix metalloprotease.

48. (Withdrawn) The cell-line of claim 47, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.

49. (Withdrawn) The cell-line of claim 47, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2 and MMP-9.

50. (Withdrawn) The cell-line of claim 47, wherein said stem cells are hematopoietic stem cells.
51. (Withdrawn) The cell-line of claim 50, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+ hematopoietic stem cells.
52. (Withdrawn) The cell-line of claim 51, wherein said hematopoietic stem cells are CD34+/CD38-/low hematopoietic stem cells.
53. (Withdrawn) The cell-line of claim 47, wherein said stem cells are mesenchymal stem cells.
54. (Withdrawn) A method of increasing sensitivity of stem cells to a chemoattractant, the method comprising, upregulating an expression or activity of at least one endogenous MMP of the stem cells to thereby increase the sensitivity of the stem cells to the chemoattractant.
55. (Withdrawn) A method of increasing sensitivity of stem cells to a chemoattractant in a subject in need, the method comprising, administering said patient with at least one matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof.
56. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 55, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from the group consisting of MMP-2, MMP-3, MMP-9, MMP-10, MMP-13 and MMP-14.
57. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 56, wherein said matrix metalloprotease is selected from a group consisting of MMP-2, and MMP-9.
58. (Withdrawn) A method of generating stem cells suitable for transplantation, the method comprising:
- (a) collecting stem cells; and
 - (b) exposing said stem cells to MMP or an active portion thereof.

59. (Withdrawn) A pharmaceutical composition comprising at least one matrix metalloprotease or an active portion thereof for treating a disorder requiring cell or tissue replacement.

60. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 59, wherein ~~wherein~~ said matrix metalloprotease is selected from a group consisting of MMP-2, and MMP-9.

61. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 60, wherein ~~wherein~~ said matrix is MMP-2.

62. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 60, wherein ~~wherein~~ said matrix is MMP-9.